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ABSTRACT

After a discussion of the circumstances that led to the unification of the two German states, this paper then evaluates the challenges to political education in Germany after unification. Beginning with the focus by the media and politics on the effects of East German political changes on the two German states, the revolution in East Germany and the time period following indicate that the opposition groups that had initiated the revolution and started to carry it out had not acquired any competence in running a market economy. The gap between the intellectual initiators of the revolution and the people becomes evident in the question of unification. The majority of the East German population's view of unification combines a departure from socialism, a desire for prosperity, and the search for identity. In 1990, the voters looked toward the elections in East Germany to bring hope for future jobs, monetary security, and environmental action. The political union of the two German states on October 3, 1990 followed intense negotiation between West Germany and East Germany. On the domestic level, political education in Germany consists of three post-unification challenges to tackle: (1) political education must deal critically with the problems caused by the collapse of the communist social system of the German Democratic Republic (GDR); (2) political education has to concern itself with the questions resulting from the fact that the western industrial states have developed into risk societies; and (3) political education must contribute to the integration of the two German societies. A consideration of the three pedagogical principles in political education and of further inner reunion of Germany concludes the paper. (CK)

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ONE GERMANY, TWO IDENTITIES?
Challenges to Political Education in Germany Following Unification

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Hans Süssmuth

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Introduction

In the first part of my paper, I will point out the circumstances that led to the unification of the two German states. Only in this way will it be possible to correctly evaluate the challenges to Political Education in Germany after unification.

1. The Peaceful Revolution in the GDR

During the period between November 9, 1989 (the day the East was opened) and October 3, 1990 (the effective date of the GDR's accession to the Federal Republic of Germany according to Article 23 of the Basic Law), there was one subject dominating the media and politics, namely, the political changes in the GDR and their effects on the two German states.

It seemed that this topic was the main one that the media focused on. All the daily papers introduced a new section called, "Reports on the GDR"; the TV and radio stations offered special broadcasts on the topic; and millions of people from the Federal Republic of Germany went to see East Germany, and vice versa.

But regardless of the large amount of information being received through these channels, it soon became clear how little the East and West Germans knew about each other. Almost every new encounter made both sides realize that they had to correct the views they had adopted the very day before.

Starting in the fall of 1989, the GDR was undergoing a process of fundamental change. The decisive driving force behind this change was the waves of refugees. Second to this huge escape came the mass protest of the citizens, which was felt in demonstrations in Leipzig and East Berlin. Together, these two movements forced the SED-leadership to implement changes. The radical restructuring from the citizens of the GDR was aimed at all areas of politics, society, culture, and economy.

The old structures, built up during the preceding four decades, were being broken down since the fall of 1989 by a peaceful revolution. During this process of revolution in the GDR, a change of direction took place. At first, the people walked in the streets shouting the slogan, "We are the people." Somewhat later, this slogan was replaced by the rally cry, "We are one people."

The peaceful revolution happened because of Gorbachev's Perestroika. As you know, Mikhail Gorbachev, on assuming office, did not envision abolishing communism and releasing Moscow's satellites in Eastern Europe from the communist bloc. He thought that the policies of Perestroika and Glasnost would reform the communist government systems. Gorbachev wanted a change of direction in order to prevent an anti-communist revolution. It was only when the reforms didn't pass that the aspired change of the system developed in a revolution.

Certainly, one must not underrate the achievements of the citizens who sped up the revolution but, nevertheless, it has to be brought to mind that there would not have been a successful development without Gorbachev's new policy. One reason

Gorbachev could not interfere with the communist European states by force was the fact that this would have jeopardized his reputation in the West as a political reformer. The peaceful revolutions of 1989 in Eastern Europe were one of the preconditions for a peaceful revolution in the GDR in 1989. The process could not be stopped once it had started.

The departure from the foundations of the previous political system of the SED -- socialist economy, ruling ideology, and the system of "really existing socialism," as it was termed -- was a complete reversal of the GDR's former structure and can truly be called a revolution.

While we had, until then, described the term "revolution" as the complete reversal of existing conditions in the areas mentioned above, and regarded the use of force as an essential element, we learned that the revolutions in Eastern Europe and in the GDR in 1989 were peaceful revolutions, bloodless revolutions, gentle revolutions. Thus, a new type of revolution was created. This upheaval, however, was bound to cause many people in the GDR to feel disconcerted, disoriented, and afraid of the future.

It is true that the great majority of the population of the GDR wanted to break with the old structures, but one has to bear in mind that although the GDR's socialist education could not create a new type of man and could not mold a socialist personality, there were, nevertheless, many people who were entirely or partially formed by the socialist education. The people knew the set of value and role expectations of the SED state. Many of them managed to keep up the balancing act

between the social requirements and their individual aims over many years. This meant that the individual person had to endure a great number of regulations on the one hand, while he or she was able to create only small areas of room to move, on the other hand.

As long as there was no chance of escaping from the comparatively closed system of the GDR, the educational system of the SED could exert a molding influence. Superficially, there existed a fixed set of relations that seemed to provide security.

But now, after the fall of l989, the newly won freedom released the citizens from firmly established structures and allowed greater room for individual life. This room, however, had to be filled. This, naturally, led to disconcertion.

No political party, no group, no civic action group, neither the churches nor any other institution in the GDR and the FRG had foreseen the development of the 1989 revolution and its effects on the GDR. Therefore, no solutions were available which could lead to fast success. The pioneers of the new parties and groups in the GDR also needed time to develop concepts that would work. But the citizens of the GDR, who had fought for political participation, didn't want to wait long for radical changes. They demanded the <u>immediate</u> completion of the revolution.

(In the GDR, the intellectuals and those fighting for civil rights failed to notice the development of the people's positions. This led to an increasing estrangement between the intellectuals and the people.)

The revolutions in Eastern Europe in 1989 were about achieving a civil society

-- a society of citizens that is intended to provide an alternative concept to the repressive power of the communist parties. It was meant to oppose a "life in truth" to the "life in lies," as Vaclav Havel put it.

2. **The New Parties and Civic Action Groups**

Opposition groups, which had united as civil rights movements, or political parties, were the initiators of the bloodless revolution in the GDR. These people had, until then, never had a chance to acquire competence in the field of politics, culture or the economy, because until that time, they had been forced to live in a closed communist system. The opposition groups' stock of people who were able to lead was very small. They had worked to realize their aims to the point of total exhaustion. The fact that the SED state forced its citizens to think along uniform lines presumably contributed to the emergence of a very large number of newly founded groups and parties. It was important that there existed a wide field of agreements among these groups:

1. They agreed to break up the leading position of the SED party for good;
2. They agreed to achieve constitutionality;
3. They agreed to introduce a market economy (and to abolish the centrally planned economy);
4. The call for German unity became ever more dominating, and an increasing number of people supported it.

Although these groups agreed on the term "constitutionality," they held different views on a market economy. Here one has to bear in mind that the inhabitants of the

GDR had never had a chance of getting to know the system of a market economy. This was also true for students and professors of economics at the universities. There was no literature on market economies to be loaned in the libraries of the GDR. Thus, the groups who had initiated the revolution and started to carry it out had not acquired any competence on a market economy.

From the very beginning, there was the dilemma that the GDR was dependent on help from outside the country, as it was not in a position to restructure its economic system as fast as the situation demanded. But at the same time, people worried that the GDR might be run over and taken in by the economic system of the FRG.

In the Federal Republic, when speaking about the revolution of 1989 to 1990, it is called a "nachholende Revolution" (Jürgen Habermas, "Die nachholende Revolution," 1990), a revolution that makes up for missed progress, about paving the way for recovering lost ground.

Other explanations regard the loss of legitimacy of the SED state as a prerequisite for the revolution. It is argued that this state had lost so much of its credibility that the population could no longer believe the content of this utopia.

A different way of explaining the revolution is to consider the dynamics of social movements as its cause. This refers to political opposition groups, which regarded themselves as a counter-cultural current with a strong sense of social ethics. Still another explanation is that this state was centered on the single party and that this party, the SED, had lost its ability to adapt to changing circumstances.

Furthermore, other people are of the opinion that the totally ineffective economy is no longer able to meet the demands as far as consumer goods are concerned. In addition, they say that this economic system has lost its innovative capacities. And, last but not least, external conditions are referred to as the cause of the revolution in the GDR. Gorbachev's influence is especially mentioned in this connection.

3. **The People: Departure from Socialism, Desire for Prosperity, and the Search for Identity**

The civil rights movements and the newly founded parties were successful only in the first phase of the revolution, namely as its initiators. Very soon, however, the gap widened mostly between the intellectual initiators of the revolution and the people. This became particularly evident in the question of unification.

While the intellectuals were of the opinion that this process had to be prepared carefully and slowly, all of these questions were of secondary importance for the people. The great majority of the GDR's population wanted a quick unification process of the two German states in order to achieve the aim that was of the utmost importance in their eyes -- the introduction of a successful economic system. Thus, we may assume that in the process of forming their opinions, many people favored unification more on a pragmatic level than on principle.

The new parties and civic action groups were run over by the opinion forming process of the people. This can be seen by the fact that the early leaflets and appeals to the public often spoke of the identity of the GDR, whereas this subject very soon lost all of its importance.

But very early, all opposition groups and many of the intellectuals expressed the fear that the people of the GDR would not be given a chance to find and to consolidate their new identity before the German unity became a reality. The intellectuals took the following analysis of the GDR's situation as their basis:

The system of the GDR had collapsed politically and economically;

It had also collapsed morally;

The people had to come to terms with this total collapse of the GDR system.

"Many are disoriented and lost in dejection, others -- out of very understandable rage, disappointment, fear, and humiliation resulting from the unacknowledged shame and self-contempt -- resort to outbursts of hatred and violence." (as the author Christa Wolf put it.)

The majority of the people in the GDR, however, was of the opinion that the difference in the level of prosperity, of the freedom of movement and settlement, and of the feeling of one's own value, which had existed between the GDR and the FRG for forty years, could be compensated more quickly by way of an immediate unification.

Friedrich Schorlemmer, a protestant clergyman, who played an essential role in the initiation and continuation of the revolution in the GDR, commented: "The revolution is also about overcoming the past together. ... We would have to pay dearly if we didn't accept the shadow of forty years, but simply denied its existence. A peaceable Germany needs a successful identity, which has gone through the fire of self-purgation, and we won't achieve this, if we quickly reach an agreement now."

He felt that many discussions were needed before unification took place, discussions about the identity of the GDR. He feared that the political, economic, social, and cultural system of the FRG could be introduced too fast without having been tested by the people of the GDR.

4. **The Year 1990: On the Way to Germany's Political Union**

Twenty-four parties ran for the first free elections to the Volkskammer (parliament) of the GDR on March 18, 1990.

The Alliance for Germany won 48.09%. (It was an alliance of the East German CDU, the German Social Union (DSU) and the Democratic Awakening Party.)

Lothar de Maizière formed a coalition government, which consisted of the Alliance for Germany, the parties of the alliance of Liberal Democrats and of the Social Democratic Party. It is worth mentioning that a number of civic action groups which, as leading opposition groups in the GDR, had started the peaceful revolution and achieved the downfall of the old government, were not represented in the newly elected first democratic government after the election victory of the Alliance for Germany. Among them were the New Forum, Democracy Now, and the Peace and Human Rights Initiative.

How did this election result come about?

In their quest for new hopes, the people of the GDR wanted to obtain answers to their questions regarding their future jobs and social security. They wanted answers to questions about the value of their savings and of the security of their old age pensions, and questions of the preservation of social institutions such as nursery

schools and of the consistent improvement of the environment by a power supply that is ecologically safe and by ecological economic enterprises.

It seemed as if many voters regarded the political closeness of the Alliance for Germany to the parties of the Christian Democratic Union in the FRG, that formed the West German government, as the guarantee that the loss of 49 years of opportunities would be compensated for in a safe and quick way, at least financially. Certainly, this vote was linked with the decision of the citizens of the GDR for:

First: Union;

Second: Constitutionality; and

Third: A Market Economy

In the first governmental declaration Lothar de Maizière, the new Prime Minister, demanded that the GDR should have the right to participate in the unification process.

This governmental declaration dealt with a subject that was bypassed in the public discussion in the Federal Republic: the question of the identity of the GDR's inhabitants.

De Maizière commented: "We contribute our country and our people to a unified Germany. We contribute the values we have created and our diligence. We contribute our education and our gift of improvising. Necessity is the mother of invention. ... We contribute our sensibility for social justice, for solidarity and for tolerance. We contribute our bitter and proud experiences on the threshold between conformity and resistance. We contribute our identity and our dignity. Our identity,

that is our history and culture, our failures and achievements, our ideals and sufferings, our dignity, that is our freedom and our human right to self-determination. ..."

On October 3, 1990, the political union of the two German states came into force. This date had been preceded by intense negotiations between the Federal Republic and the GDR during the period from March 18 (the first free Volkskammer elections) to October 3.

In the field of domestic policy, the negotiations were about the creation of a monetary, an economic, and a social union. The "German Unity" committee of the German Bundestag (Parliament), which was comprised of members of all parliamentary parties, was instructed to enter into negotiations, just as the bureaucracies of the various ministries.

On July 1, 1990, the treaty on monetary, economic and social union came into force. The Deutschmark became the sole currency in both German states. On August 31, 1990, the unity treaty between the GDR and the Federal Republic was signed. In 1990, five new Länder (states) had to be established on the territory of the GDR.

To recall to one's mind the problems that had to be solved, one has to mention the fact that the qualification of all judges and prosecuting attorneys to work in a constitutional state had to be checked. Furthermore, at the universities and schools, the professors' and teachers' political reliability had to be assessed. The

administrations on the local and state levels also had to be checked. Tens of thousands of people did not know the demands of a constitutional state.

Another gigantic problem to be tackled was the restructuring of the economy. The tasks of foreign policy were of the same importance as the domestic ones. Without any doubt, negotiations with the victorious powers had to take place.

The decisive negotiating partners, who made German unification possible, were the president of the United States, George Bush, and the president of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev. At first, Mitterand hesitated, but then did not impede the process of unification. Margaret Thatcher at first declared herself against unification, but eventually did not obstruct it.

Smaller states such as Poland, which had endured the horrible period of the Nazi dictatorship, demanded certain security guarantees. These smaller states looked at Germany in the following way:

By combining 60 million West German people and 16 million citizens from East Germany, a giant was going to be created.

Although this giant would not attack its neighbors militarily, as the Nazis did, a potential economic predominance was regarded as a great threat.

The security demands of Germany's neighbors, above all Poland, had to be taken into account.

Germany wanted to reach its unification as a member of NATO and within the framework of its European neighbors.

We all know that Gorbachev at first described a NATO membership of the whole of Germany unacceptable. The necessary international safeguards were achieved in the Two-plus-Four-Talks. Among these safeguards was the unequivocal acknowledgement of the Oder-NeiBe-border as Poland's permanent western border.

5. **Political Education in Germany after the Unification**

Every democratic society aims to introduce its living generation and above all its adolescent youth to the established norms and values, and to enable them to participate in their society in a critical way.

In the FRG the sociologist Krappmann has tried to determine the relationship between the individual and the society, not only under the aspect of socialization, but also to take into account the individuality of people. He wants to secure room to act and move for the individual, as the individual does not merely adopt roles, but also contributes to the process of shaping them. In this way, people develop their individual identity.

As a prerequisite, the individual has to learn to regard a role in a detached way, to reflect upon it critically, and to digest the divergent expectations connected to it. Individual identity is achieved when individuals manage to make their own needs felt and when they are not predominantly determined by social expectations. The unique biography of the individual is evidence of his or her personal identity. Social identity manifests itself in the fact that the individual is a member of different groups at the same time.

Krappmann regards the balance between these two identities as the individual identity (Ich-Identität). Thus, socialization means both the process of adopting social roles and the process of the development of the individual. While political education in the FRG has been and still is oriented according to the values of a free democracy, the GDR's education was based on the opposite concept. Political education in the GDR was about shaping and molding the socialist personality. This education rejected the values of the community of western nations.

By way of indoctrination (which started at kindergarten), it aimed to bring the young people up to support the dogmatism of the communist ideology. Political education in Germany after the unification has to take into account that two societies, which have developed in different directions for forty years (since 1949) and which have disassociated themselves from each other, shall be led to an inner union as well.

The problems in the new and in the old Länder (states) differ from each other: Whereas in the five new Läander, the main object is to modernize the industrial equipment, to increase production, and to build an infrastructure so that the people will attain fast the western standard of living, the old states, which had a higher level of industrial development, have been concerned with amending social and ecological faults since the Eighties.

It has been recognized that there are great technical risks inherent in the processes of technical modernization, that environmental disasters have to be prevented, and that the industrialized society increasingly has to face the question of

its sense. Therefore, on the domestic level, political education in Germany after 1989 has to tackle above all three challenges:

1.1 Political education must deal critically with the problems caused by the collapse of the communist social system of the GDR.

1.2 Political education has to concern itself with the questions resulting from the fact that the western industrial states have developed into risk societies.

1.3 Political education must -- after the unification -- contribute to the integration of the two German societies.

These three challenges refer mostly to German domestic problems. Beyond that, political education has to face the question: How can mankind survive, a topic with which it concerned itself in the FRG before 1989?

2.1 How can we get control of the destruction of the environment?

2.2 How can we control the technological developments?

2.3 How is world peace to be achieved and maintained?

2.4 How can the misery of the Third World be redressed structurally?

Now, let me talk about 1.11: Political education must deal critically with the problems caused by the collapse of the communist social system of the GDR.

Political education for Eastern Germany must provide materials and ways of learning which serve the objective of a penetrating treatment of the history of the GDR and of the typical lives of its citizens. Furthermore, political education in the new Länder must establish the conditions for dealing critically with the Nazi dictatorship.

As the communists declared the GDR a nation of heroes, resistance fighters and victims of the Nazi dictatorship, the subject of the "fascist past" was put under taboo. The guilt and participation of the majority of the sympathizers and nominal party members were never critically dealt with in the GDR.

It is true that the fascist atrocities were depicted extensively in the schools, but connected to this was the firm belief that the unbearable crimes had been committed by the fascists. In the GDR, however, there were no longer any of these fascists -- the communists argued.

In this context, one has to take into consideration the rise of extreme right-wing groups among the youth, especially in East Germany. Political education has to provide a forum for the discussion of the causes of this right-wing extremism.

And we have to ask: Is there a lack of information about the period of the Nazi dictatorship? Or, is the right-wing extremism of juveniles in the ex-GDR a consequence of the radical social changes brought about by the restructuring of Eastern Germany? Or, are both aspects to be regarded as a cause?

The East German psychologist, Hans-Joachim Maatz, explains the behavior of extreme right-wing youth in the new Länder as follows:

"You only have to take a closer look at the behavior of the extreme right-wing juveniles: They try to find the community. They desire a strict leadership. They pay homage to a cult of strength and work off their anger by use of violence. They pretend to be militant. Order, discipline and obedience rank high on their scale of values.

The community is supposed to compensate their "loss of home," i.e., their having been uprooted. By showing off strength, they want to conceal their own impotence, fear and hurt feelings. Discipline and order are meant to provide a support for their inner chaos. The use of violence strains their relationships in the same way juveniles have experienced for all their lives."

Maaz draws the following conclusion:

"More than anything else, better living conditions remind people who have grown up under unhappy, most often violent, conditions, of the injuries they had to suffer in the past. It is as paradoxical as it is tragic that for this reason these people prefer to behave in a way which ensures the continuation of their being rejected."

Maaz regards the use of violence of the juveniles as the desperate cry of hope to be able, all the same, to achieve better conditions -- attention, understanding, acceptance, security, and love.

Now, let me talk about 1.2: political education into a risk society.

In the Federal Republic, there has been a tendency since the Seventies to view the technically generated risks both in the field of military armament and in civilian production as problems about which one has to fight only on the level of one's conscience. Thus, this fight does no longer seem to be a struggle on material grounds on the basis of common political and ethical principles. Questions of nuclear risks and of the application of genetics, for example, belong to this context.

Political education must support a political framework for the risk society in which controversial and contentious issues can be discussed. The hazardous decisions have to be made clear by those responsible.

On the other hand, those members of society who want to veto a certain decision must be given the opportunity to express their criticism in public. In the end, a democratic compromise has to be reached. Thus, this framework is about the political dialogue between the citizens and the experts in the state.

Now, I will talk about 1.3: Political education must contribute to the integration of the two German societies.

Although the integration of the two societies in Germany is above all a task of politics, political education nevertheless has to attend and support this process in order to contribute to the removal of misunderstandings and obstacles to gain this aim. This refers to basic information about:

-- the foundations of a democracy
-- a constitutional state
-- the party system of the FRG
-- federalism
-- the development of political objectives, and
-- decision processes on the local and regional levels.

But this refers also to the teaching of the history of both German states since 1949.

In conclusion, I would like to add a few remarks on pedagogical principles which apply to the political education in Germany, particularly after the unification.

In Germany, there exists an agreement that people should recall.

Political education has to secure the following principles:

1. The prohibition to overwhelm pupils, which means that teachers are not allowed to take pupils by surprise and impose the desired attitudes, thereby preventing the pupils from reaching an opinion independently.

Indoctrination is incompatible with the principles of a democratic society and with the pedagogical objective of independent and self-reliant pupils.

2. Subjects which are regarded as controversial in politics and scholarship must also be presented as controversial at school.

3. Students have to learn to analyze a political situation and their own interests, and to search for ways and means to influence the given political situation according to their interest. This objective includes, to a great extent, the importance of operational abilities.

The success of political education, which at present aims in particular to further the inner reunion of Germany, depends on the following aspects:

First, that it is confined to a few crucial subjects;

Second, that West Germans and East Germans are included in the critical treatment of these crucial subjects as being affected in different ways;

Third, that East and West Germany are brought together as <u>equal</u> partners in the discussion.

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